IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 2 without prejudice.

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Twice Amended) A blood collection apparatus comprising:

a blood collection tube defining an inner surface and an end; and

a thixotropic gel being configured to form a transverse barrier between a lighter phase and a heavier phase of a blood sample during centrifugation, the gel being selectively dispensed for centrifugation along the inner surface relative to the end based on at least one dimension of the blood collection tube and a volume of the blood sample being collected.

4. (Twice Amended) A blood collection apparatus comprising:

a blood collection tube defining a central inner surface and an end; and

a thixotropic gel being configured to form a transverse barrier between a lighter phase and a heavier phase of a blood sample during centrifugation, the gel being dispensed for centrifugation along a portion of the central inner surface, the portion of the central inner surface defining a predetermined first limit and a predetermined second limit relative to the end, the limits being predetermined based on at least one dimension of the blood collection tube and the volume of a blood sample being collected.

19. (Twice Amended) A blood collection apparatus comprising:

means for collecting a sample of blood defining a central inner surface; and

a thixotropic gel being configured to form a transverse barrier between a lighter phase and a heavier phase of a blood sample during centrifugation, the gel being dispensed for centrifugation along a predetermined portion of the central inner surface, the predetermined

portion being predetermined based on at least one dimension of the means for collecting a blood sample and a volume of the blood sample being collected.

21. (Twice Amended) A method for separating a sample of blood into portions including a light serum portion and a heavy cellular portion, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a blood collection tube defining a central inner surface and an end;

providing a dispensing apparatus configured to dispense a thixotropic gel, being configured to form a transverse barrier between the light serum portion and the heavy cellular portion of a blood sample during centrifugation, along a portion of the central inner surface, the portion of the central inner surface defining a predetermined first limit and a predetermined second limit relative to the end, the limits being predetermined based on at least one dimension of the blood collection tube and a volume of the blood sample being collected;

dispensing the gel for centrifugation via the dispensing apparatus along the portion of the central inner surface;

providing the sample of blood within the blood collection tube; and

manipulating the blood collection tube to separate the light serum portion of the blood sample from the heavy cellular portion of the blood sample.

30. (Twice Amended) A blood collection apparatus for separating a sample of blood into portions including a light serum portion and a heavy cellular portion, the blood collection apparatus comprising:

a blood collection tube having an open end, a closed end and defining a central inner surface therebetween, at least a portion of the central inner surface having a non-stick

coating, the blood collection tube being configured for receipt of a volume of a blood sample; and

a dispensing apparatus having a nozzle disposed at a distal end thereof, the nozzle including a plurality of openings disposed about a circumference defined by the nozzle, said plurality of openings configured to dispense a thixotropic gel, being configured to form a transverse barrier between the light serum portion and the heavy cellular portion of the blood sample during centrifugation, along a portion of the central inner surface for centrifugation, the portion of the central inner surface defining a predetermined first limit and a predetermined second limit relative to the open end;

wherein the predetermined first limit is based on the following formula: predetermined first limit = $X \cdot C_{11}$, where X is a linear dimension of the blood collection tube and C_{11} is a constant based on at least one factor of the blood collection apparatus, and the predetermined second limit is based on the following formula: predetermined second limit = $X \cdot C_{11}$, where C_{11} is a constant based on at least one factor of the blood collection apparatus.

Attached as Exhibit A are marked-up copies of amended claims 1, 4, 19, 21 and 30. Please substitute the amended claims for the pending claims with the same number in the application file.

REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated April 10, 2002. Claims 1-11 and 14-30 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 3-11 and 14-30 are amended in a manner that Applicant believes overcomes the rejections in the Office Action. Support for the amendments can be found throughout the specification and figures of the present disclosure and recite aspects of the disclosure that Applicant is believed to be entitled. No new matter or issues are believed to be introduced by the amendments. Claim 2 is cancelled without prejudice.